

Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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Do we need a new political party?

Anyone in Fine Gael who thought that their problems were over after the recent leadership heave received a bit of a shock this week with the intervention of Lucinda Creighton who has really put Enda Kenny under pressure again. Her speech in Donegal on Monday about corporate donations has put the cat among the pigeons again.

I have been very critical of the Fianna Fáil tent at the Galway races in the past and how that party have been funded over the years, but there is no doubt that Fine Gael people are talking out of the two sides of their mouths on this issue. How can they criticise Fianna Fáil and where they get their money on the one hand and then run a big golf classic and expect developers to pay into it on the other hand?

In fact the sight of the NAMA developers cosyng up to Enda Kenny in the Sunday papers at the K Club was pretty revealing and gives weight to those who argue that "they are all the same" when it comes to politicians. It shows that not alone is there a golden circle in Fianna Fáil but it is alive and well in Fine Gael too. It's all about public perception.

Enda Kenny may well have won the recent leadership vote but it is clear that there are many in his party who are very unhappy with him still. It will be interesting to see how Enda Kenny handles this latest development. Watch out for the next opinion poll. If Labour make more gains on Fine Gael the pressure will begin to grow on Enda Kenny again. Lucinda Creighton's speech

this week might be the start of more problems for Enda.

I think that it would be fair to say that the reputation of politics in general in this country is now at an all-time low among the general public. It gives rise to a very interesting argument that I have heard in the past few weeks about whether there is a need for a totally new political party here.

There are huge sections of our society who feel that there is no one to represent them politically.

I listened to a very interesting debate on Newstalk recently about whether there is a need for a new political party. The general feeling was that there is a huge political vacuum out there

but it was also agreed that it is very hard to break into the system as it stands. The funding of political parties has long been a very important issue. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael get their money from donations and membership, as we have seen in recent weeks, months and years.

The Labour Party is funded largely by the unions, Sinn Féin is very well funded but no one is exactly sure where that money comes from.

Any small party or independents will tell you that it is extremely hard to fund an election campaign, so to set up a political party is a very difficult thing to do. I would love to hear from the readers of this column as to whether they think there is a need for a new political party. Email me at sport@roscommonpeople.ie.

Flood report won't be acted upon

It was interesting to read the report of the committee that reported on the Government response to the very bad weather of last winter and all the problems that brought.

The report is critical of the response of the Government but the question is why did we need this report at all? Everyone of us who lived through last winter knew that the response was inadequate. There was no leadership at all. In fact when Noel Dempsey decided to come back from his continental holiday all he could do was sneer and make jokes about the situation.

The report finds that people who were at risk of severe flooding were not warned. The report also says that there are a breathtaking number of agencies responsible for the River Shannon. That has been pointed out in this column and many others for years and years. What are the chances of anything happening as a result of this report? I would say that absolutely nothing will happen. The report will be thrown into a drawer and will gather dust and the next time we have severe weather and terrible hardship on people, the same problems will surface again. We saw it here in county Roscommon. Some people were very badly affected and they sustained damages to their homes and businesses that they will never recover from.

Warnings not heeded

In the wake of the terrible accident last week in Donegal, I heard a story at the weekend that underlines exactly what I have been saying about the behaviour of some young male drivers.

Regardless of what tragedies happen, regardless of what ads are on TV and radio, and regardless of what warnings they are given, it would seem that they are determined to take huge chances on the road. A good friend told me that he was walking in the vicinity of Roscommon Town one evening recently. Two cars came around the corner at huge speed. One car was so close behind the other that my friend was convinced that it was being towed. However as the cars sped by him he realised that one car was being driven about five feet away from the back of the other, and that the cars were travelling at 70 to 80 mph. What day was that? It was a Monday evening, less than 24 hours after eight people were killed in Donegal.

Then we have the YouTube video from coun-

ty Tipperary that emerged this week, which shows groups of young lads in cars speeding and acting the idiot as they speed around country roads. I watched that video in full on Wednesday, and the guys in it are clearly identifiable. They should be brought before the courts and given driving bans. What can be done about this situation in general? I don't know. Actually, I have no idea. One thing I do know. There are some young male drivers out there who will heed no warning from anyone. Just hope and pray that you, or anyone in your family, do not meet them on the road.



Ann O'Dea (piano), Siobhan Doyle and Jimmy Dixon pictured on stage at Castlecoote House during the Percy French Summer School. Pic: Glynn's Photography.

Thanks for the advice Brian

Brian Cowen last week urged people to be positive about the economy and maybe he is right. But if you are one of the 455,000 who are unemployed, if you cannot afford to pay your mortgage if your family members are emigrating, or thinking about emigrating, then it is not an easy thing to do.

The ESRI say that 100,000 people have left the country in the last two years and that 120,000 more will be gone by 2012. Today's estimates are that the Irish economy will have turned the corner by 2015, which is something positive to report I suppose. But the pain will

continue for the next few years. The ESRI says today that the government will have to find four billion euro in savings in the budget this year. The Lord above only knows what that will mean for us all.

There is no doubt about it that there will be a recovery but I am not so sure it will come as soon as we are being told. There are so many problems in the economy that we have a long, long way to go. The biggest problem of all is unemployment. We have got to try and get a lot of these people back to work and stop the thousands who are leaving the country. The biggest test for the Govern-

ment will be to come up with a plan to keep small businesses in operation and to create jobs for those who need them.

But there are things to be positive about. The road system in the country is now very good for the most part. Iarnród Éireann trains now run on time (most of the time) and the Luas system is very good, when one is in Dublin. There are some super schools around the country and there have been big advances in several other areas too. However, we have a long way to go before we are out of the woods yet. That's the reality.